

Colby



Colby Magazine

Volume 88
Issue 1 *Winter 1999*

Article 4

January 1999

Fourth Floor Eustis

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine>

Recommended Citation

(1999) "Fourth Floor Eustis," *Colby Magazine*: Vol. 88: Iss. 1, Article 4.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine/vol88/iss1/4>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by the College Archives: Colbiana Collection at Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colby Magazine by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Colby. For more information, please contact mfkelly@colby.edu.



The Good Book

Want to start an argument? Tell someone that his or her favorite book really isn't *that* good. Say it doesn't pass muster as great literature. Then watch as his or her cheeks begin to flush.

Whether the book in question is *Old Yeller* or *Ulysses*, devotees will put up a fight if you disrespect it. If we disregard the arrogant elitism or the Philistine antagonism that occupy the margins, our debate about books generally boils down to how they make us feel. We are outcome-oriented in this respect, as we are with most things. Judging a book to be good usually implies that we got something from it besides a headache.

The trouble begins when we try to define, beyond our individual tastes, what constitutes great literature. Criticism is ubiquitous—in newspapers, magazines, bookstore leaflets and around the water cooler—but what finally determines whether one book is "better" than another? The criteria are slippery.

Charles Bassett, a professional reader of books, has taken a stab in this issue of *Colby* at making sense of The Book Debate. He begins by deconstructing a controversial list compiled by The Modern Library last summer. Charlie, like any good South Dakotan, doesn't get all hyperventilated about the list or about its detractors. The point is, he says, there are a lot of great books out there: who cares which one is the "best"?

For some extra fun we've included, in addition to the Modern Library list, a competing list from *Library Journal* and Charlie's own irregularly shaped Top 13. Alas, a-boy-and-his-dog stories don't fare well.

All of this list making inspired us to do one of our own. If you have Web access, we invite you to weigh in with your favorite selections in our online poll (www.colby.edu/colby/mag/) Otherwise, write to us and let us know what books you would put in your own Top 10. We'll compile the results and report them in our next issue.

Happy reading

Colby

Volume 88

Number 1

Colby Staff:

Kevin Cool
managing editor

Brian Speer
art director

Robert Gillespie
Alumni at Large editor

Stephen Collins '74
executive editor

Leo Pando
illustrator

Joanne Lafreniere
staff assistant

Eliza Hoover '99
design assistant

Brian Speer, Scott Perry,
Maureen Kennedy, Jeff Earickson
contributing photographers

Chris Buck, Matt Apuzzo '00
contributing writers

Administration:

William R. Cotter, *president*;
Peyton R. Helm, *vice president for
development and alumni relations*;
Earl H. Smith, *dean of the College*;
Margaret Viens '77, *director of
alumni relations*

Alumni Council Executive Committee:

Joanne Weddell Magyar '71, *chair*;
John Devine '78, *vice chair*; David
Bergquist '61; James Bourne '81;
Arthur Brennan '68; Lisa A. Halle
'81; Diana Herrmann '80; Gail
Glickman Horwood '86; Stephen
Langlois '85; Barbara Bone Leavitt
'52; Lou Richardson McGinity '67;
Susan Jacobson Nester '88; M. Jane
Powers '86; Johnston Whitman '59;
Philip Wysor '70

Colby is published four times yearly
for the alumni, friends, parents of
students, seniors, faculty and staff
of Colby College.

Address correspondence to:

Managing Editor, *Colby*
4181 Mayflower Hill
Waterville, ME 04901-8841

or e-mail to:
mag@colby.edu

on the internet:
<http://www.colby.edu/colby/mag/>

Alumni Office
207-872-3190